

Senate Bill 125
Senate Judiciary Committee
January 12, 2007

SENATE JUDICIARY
Exhibit No. 2
Date 1-12-07
SB/25

A. Introduction

Good Morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I'm Ginny Hill and I'm a forensic psychiatrist working on the Forensic Program at Montana State Hospital.

B. Support

I am here requesting your support for Senate Bill 125. This is a bill delineating a mechanism to provide involuntary treatment for seriously disturbed forensic patients at Montana State Hospital, and to establish rule-making authority for forensic evaluations.

C. History

Approximately two years ago, I began having conversations with our state's attorney, Paulette Kohman, about forensic patients who were actively psychotic, disrupting the treatment of the peers, and who remained in the hospital untreated for months because of their refusal to accept necessary treatment. Today's bill evolved from those discussions.

D. Rationale

I have always had a problem with utilizing expensive hospital resources for containment or warehousing, and I believe taxpayers have an expectation that if a person has been court committed to a hospital, treatment ensues. This would seem particularly pertinent in the situation of a forensic patient, whose dangerous behaviors/criminal charges are believed to have emanated, at least in part, from their mental disease. The majority of forensic patients do not refuse treatment. However, the behaviors of this minority group who refuse treatment, become especially problematic when it antagonizes and disturbs the treatment of peers seeking to recover from their mental illness symptoms.

E. Benefits of Senate Bill 125

From the perspective of a person who has been assigned the responsibility of providing treatment and security to this population, I believe that Senate Bill 125 takes some very positive steps toward that goal. These include:

1. Lessening the potential for treatment refractoriness when patients with active psychotic symptoms are promptly treated
2. Promoting the dignity and self-respect of individuals who cannot recognize how extremely self-defeating their irrational behaviors are
3. Decreasing the risk of disruption and harm to other patients and staff on the Forensic Program
4. Decreasing the length of stay at an expensive hospital level of care as well as daily costs
5. Lessening problems that can sometimes arise related to speedy trial issues
6. Providing evaluation guidelines to assure persons are appropriately committed to the Forensic Program
7. Ensuring sufficient oversight of involuntary treatment, in the form of meeting Sell criteria for unfit to proceed (UTP) patients, and satisfying the requirements of the Involuntary Medication Review Board at Montana State Hospital for not guilty by reason of mental illness (NGRI) patients

Thank you for your time and consideration of Senate Bill 125. I welcome any questions you may have.

Ginny Hill, Forensic Psychiatrist
Montana State Hospital
406-693-7000
vhill@mt.gov